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THE LEADER AND ORGANIZATION CULTURE: NAVIGATING THE
TRICKY CURRENTS(U) MINNESOTA UNIV MINNEAPOLIS STRATEGIC
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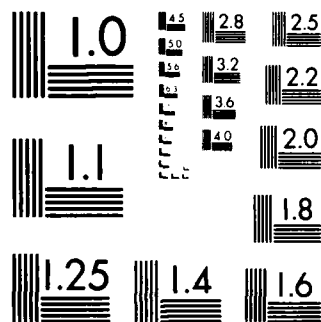
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THE STRATEGIC
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Discussion Paper #13
July, 1984
Strategic Management Research Center
University of Minnesota

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Daniel R. Gilbert, Jr. is an Instructor and Research Associate affiliated with the Strategic Management Research Center, and Nancy C. Roberts is Assistant Professor in the Department of Strategic Management and Organization. Research in preparation of this paper was conducted with the support of the Bush Foundation, the Strategic Management Research Center, and the Program on Organization Effectiveness, Office of Naval Research, Grant Number N00014-84-K0016.

1. Bush Foundation
2. Strategic Management Research Center
3. Program on Organization Effectiveness
4. Office of Naval Research

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER ONR Technical Report #2	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. <i>A152713</i>	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) The Leader and Organization Culture: Navigating the Tricky Currents		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Interim Technical Report
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER SMRC DP #13
7. AUTHOR(s) Daniel R. Gilbert, Jr. Nancy C. Roberts		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) N00014-84-K0016
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Strategic Management Research Center University of Minnesota 271-19th Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55455		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS NR #170-966
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Office of Naval Research Organizational Effectiveness Group Code 4420E, Arlington, VA 22217		12. REPORT DATE November 1984
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 39
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited. Reproduction in whole or part is permitted for any purpose of the United States government.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Leadership, Organization Culture, Instrumental View, Navigational View		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The thesis of the paper can be summarized as follows: (1) Organization culture can and should be managed; (2) the process of culture management cannot be under- stood, nor specified, as a directed, instrumental approach; (3) instead, the process involves a long-term adaptation of organization culture and strategy with organizational leadership playing the driving role in the process of culture management. A popular, instrumental view that culture offers the levers for the shrewd general manager to pull, is review and assessed. Subsequently, a different perspective--a navigational view--is proposed. According to this, (over)		

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the process of culture change is long-term, energy-intensive, and leader-driven. At best, a slight nudge to organization culture is the probable outcome, but this may be sufficient to ensure implementation of a strategic change.

A rudimentary model for strategic leadership is then developed, and a case study about leadership and organization culture is recounted to exemplify the proposed roles of leadership and culture in managing strategic change.

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There is a bit of mariner in all of us. At least, one might get that impression scanning the metaphors in fashion to describe the uncertainties of organizational life. We are warned by Lester Thurow about "dangerous currents", are led through "turbulent times" by Peter Drucker, and are enlightened about the "impending wave" of civilization by Alvin Toffler. We, as management scholars and practitioners, respond by creating and riding the tides of perspective about how organizations can adapt to their surroundings. Just as tides come and go, so, too, some management approaches profoundly alter the organizational shores upon which they fall. Others roll back to sea in anonymity. The popular, contemporary perspective at issue in this paper and at the Managing Corporate Cultures Conference is organization culture. At issue in this paper is the particular idea that a general manager can and should endeavor to manage that culture.

The concept of organization culture is not novel. Barnard (1938) recognized the existence and importance of value systems at work within an organization. Selznick (1957) found use for the concept of "character" as the foundation for an organization's distinctive culture. Pettigrew (1979) referred to the "expressive social tissue" of everyday organizational activity (p. 93). The current management literature flourishes on the subject of what culture is and what the manager is to do with it.

Nor is the suggestion new that an effective general manager should attempt to manage the flow of the organization's set of shared assumptions and beliefs to chart the best strategic course

for the organization:

Executive responsibility...is that capacity of leaders by which, reflecting attitudes, ideals, hopes, derived largely from without themselves, they are compelled to bind the wills of men to the accomplishment of purposes beyond their immediate ends, beyond their times. (Barnard, 1938: 283)

Indoctrination becomes critically important...if policies are new and meet resistance....(Selznick, 1957: 58)

Although debated in the literature, we accept the basic premise that every organization has a system of "publically and collectively accepted meanings operating...at a given time..." (Pettigrew, 1979: 93), which can be called a culture. To the extent that these meanings, or values and beliefs, work for, or against, the agendas of general management, top-level attention to organization culture is understandable. The issue is how general managers operationalize that attention. Contemporary managers have been chastised for not attempting to influence organizational behavior as aggressively as they might (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). While we are in basic agreement with that contention, the point is how to channel that aggressiveness. Even then, the probable effects of culture management efforts may prove to be disappointingly small.

Our thesis is straightforward:

1. Organization culture can and should be managed.
2. The process of culture management cannot be understood, nor specified, as a directed, technical "quick fix" approach. Instead, the process involves a long-term adaptation of organizational culture and strategy.
3. Organizational leadership plays the driving role in the

process of culture management.

We begin by emphasizing the emergent nature of organization culture and by suggesting a relationship between the organization's culture and its history. A strategic view of organization culture is then introduced. Borrowing Pettigrew's (1979) concept of "social drama", the argument is made that culture can be managed at strategic choice points in the organization's history. At these points, organization-wide change is proposed by general management to the organization. The organization's collective response is an indicator, we will argue, of the degree of compatibility between the organization culture and the cultural implicit in the strategic change. What the general manager does in the quest for strategy-culture alignment is the key to understanding successful strategic implementation.

A popular, instrumental view, that culture offers the levers for the shrewd general manager to pull, is reviewed and assessed. Subsequently, a different perspective--a navigational view--is proposed. In our view, the process of culture change is long-term, energy-intensive, and leader-driven. At best, a slight nudge to organization culture is the probable outcome, but this may be sufficient to ensure implementation of the strategic change.

A rudimentary model for strategic leadership is then developed, and a case study about leadership and organization culture will be recounted to exemplify the proposed roles of leadership and

culture in managing strategic change. The waters of organization culture contain many hazards. We think that navigation of the tricky currents of organization culture is more problematic than the popular navigation charts may be leading general managers to believe.

ORGANIZATION CULTURE

We find Schein's (1983b) definition and perspective on organization culture useful:

Organization culture...is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration--a pattern of assumptions that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 14)

This definition implies several basic ideas about culture which are important to highlight. First, culture is a composite of the underlying assumptions that people hold about their world. These assumptions are implicit in the ways people relate to one another, solve their problems, and give meaning to their work. These underlying assumptions are contrasted with more explicit expressions of culture, such as "myth", "symbols", "sagas", and "rituals". These artifacts of culture are the more visible manifestations that a culture exists, but they are not the culture itself. To study culture is to examine the fundamental assumptions people hold about their world and the place they hold in it.

Schein (1983b) identifies five different types of underlying assumptions around which a culture forms: the assumptions about

an organization's relationship to its environment; assumptions about the nature of reality and truth; assumptions about the nature of human nature and what it means to be human; assumptions about the nature of human activity--what is work and play, for example; and the assumptions about the nature of human relationships--the correct way to organize and structure relationships, in other words (p. 16).

These assumptions around which a culture forms bring us to a second critical point about organization culture. The creation and definition of culture is an emergent process. While an organization's founder may introduce a set of assumptions, those assumptions are tested and modified, as the founder interacts with others in the organization to solve problems of external adaptation, survival, and internal integration. Culture, then, is socially constructed (Berger and Luckman, 1966); it evolves from a complex set of interactions among the founder and those who join forces with him or her to solve the organization's problems over time. It is in this sense that organization culture is never completely defined, nor static. It is always moving and changing as the cast of characters, and crises, pull or push it in one direction, or another.

The emergent nature of organization culture brings us to a third major point. While culture evolves, it also follows a pattern of development that extends from "birth" to "maturity". It is born with the explicit, and often implicit, assumptions of the founder, and it matures as it becomes shared with others in the

organization. While a culture in its initial stages may be more open and malleable, the aging analogy suggests that it becomes more well-defined and patterned through the years. As a consequence, attempts to change culture may prove especially difficult the greater the culture's maturity and the longer its history.

Thus, we speculate that greater and greater sources of energy and effort are required to modify or change a culture once it reaches a more mature stage of development. This level of energy and intensity is a critical issue for organizational leadership and is the central focus of what follows in this paper.

THE STRATEGIC VIEW OF ORGANIZATION CULTURE

The organizational world is dynamic. Something changes, either external or internal to the organization; opportunities and threats abound, and the organization is challenged to change. organization's culture is jeopardized. Thus, we enter the domain of the general manager and the part that the "critical experience" of institutional leadership can play (Selznick, 1957:36). In contemporary terminology, this is the realm of strategic management.

Strategic management consists of both strategy formulation and strategy implementation. From the ancestral model of institutional leadership to the descendant framework of strategic management, the fundamental prescriptions about how to effectively manage these twin processes has remained remarkably

consistent and clear. In formulating strategy, the general manager initiates and leads the double-barrelled process of: 1) identifying the opportunities and potential threats in the new environmental situation; and 2) evaluating the organization's readiness--that is, its collective strengths and weaknesses--to make the transition to a less threatening strategic state. In particular, this evaluation focuses upon the willingness and capacity of the human organization to respond. From the assessments of the viable alternatives and what the organization can deliver, the strategic change decision emerges.

Strategy implementation refers to those steps necessary to "...transform a neutral body of men into a committed polity...." (Selznick, 1957:61). Implementation, in other words, involves selling the organization on the strategic idea. No guarantee exists that the strategy will be adopted by the organization's members routinely, quickly, or in total. The transitional waters are precarious, as elements of the new strategic order are imposed upon the space occupied by the present order; all the while, the organizational vessel must plow ahead.

Strategic Choice Points

What has just been described comprises the contemporary view of strategic management (Schendel and Hofer, 1979).

The general manager practicing this budding science confronts a hierarchy of choice points in strategy formulation and strategy implementation. Implicit at each choice point is the capability and willingness of the organization to respond to the forces that

have set the strategic management process in motion in the first place. Since the manifestations of this capability and willingness can reveal a great deal about the organization's culture, the framework that we propose for understanding organization culture can be termed the strategic view of culture.

Taking a strategic view of organization culture means recognizing that the organization's culture can conceivably influence the choices made at each step of the formulation and implementation processes. The general manager will face a hierarchy consisting of as many as four (4) choice points in leading the organization through turbulent times (Beckhard and Harris, 1977).

Choice Point #1...Does the organization's strategy need to be altered, given a new set of environmental circumstances?

In the vernacular of strategic management, this choice point is triggered by means of the environmental scanning process from the organization's "crow's nest". An organization's strategy statement serves the function of setting a standard against which the general manager can evaluate the potential effects of trends in the operating environment. In short, this is the organization's navigational plan that provides the pertinent perspective by which to assess environmental trends as being important, or not. Not all environmental scanning need be externally focused. A key executive could leave, for example. Thus, strategic response can be driven by forces from within and without the organization.

strategy-culture synergy.

This steering process involves three major integrated activities:

1) Building coalitions with key organizational players to enlist their support for the values and purposes inherent in the new strategy; 2) opening the change process to frequent and relevant participation by the organization's members; and 3) creating structures to implement, serve, and sustain the new strategy.

In scanning the organization's internal environment, the navigational leader continually works to identify those people holding the power to bring about broad-based support for the strategic change. The leader's ability to influence these actors represents a strength or weakness in the strategy implementation process. To be sure, the instruments of culture maintenance are likely to be used in this process. For example, the use of ritual and heroes can serve the transforming leader's implementation purposes. But this is only appropriate as the means to the larger goal of enlisting new "lieutenants" in the strategic change effort.

Culture change also involves the uprooting of commonly-held, traditional assumptions. So, in addition to building coalitions with the key players in the change context, the navigational leader must also work to link the broader organizational membership to the planned changes. One effective means to that end is direct and meaningful participation by members in the transition process. For strategy implementation to succeed, we claim that the collective assent of the organization's membership

Culture Maintenance

If, after analyzing the messages gathered through tapping and testing the culture network, alignment appears plausible to the general manager, what we term cultural maintenance activities are in order. These activities include propagating rituals, appointing heroes, and spreading sagas, legends, and myths.

This maintenance approach constitutes the instrumentalist's playground. Relatively secure in sensing that the strategic change does not challenge the present, dominant culture, the general manager can devote his or her attention to fine-tuning the organization culture by the instruments at his or her disposal, such as rituals and legends. The danger in taking this maintenance approach, of course, is that the general manager can be lulled into a sense of complacency about the stability of the organization culture. Alignment between strategy and culture can be a fleeting situation. Thus, culture maintenance cannot be taken for granted.

Culture Transformation

The task of the navigational leader is to direct the organization members' collective attention and energy toward considering the strategic change. Central to this task is infusion of the values that are inherent in the new strategy into the present culture. This is culture transformation, the process of creating a

Figure 1

A Strategic Alignment Model for Leadership and Culture

Choice Point #1

Does the organization's strategy need to be altered?

Process of environmental scanning

Choice Point #2

What is the "best" strategic response?

Process of strategy formulation: identifying opportunities and threats, and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the organization to respond.

Choice Point #3

To what degree is the "best" candidate for strategic change aligned with the organization's culture?

Process of internal environmental scanning.

Choice Point #4

What is the most appropriate intervention strategy for implementing the "best" strategic change?

4A...If alignment is significant, culture maintenance activities are appropriate.

4B...If misalignment is significant, a transformation strategy is appropriate, conducted from the navigational view.

Process of: Building coalitions with key constituents.

Participatory implementation.

Structural embodiment of the strategic change.

We combine the hierarchy of the four choice points noted proposed previously into a rudimentary model for aligning strategy and culture in the context of strategic change. Choice points 1 and 2, framing the strategy formulation decision, are linked with choice points 3 and 4, the strategy implementation phase, to comprise this model. The essence of alignment is that the same steps that apply to strategy formulation hold, as well, for strategy implementation, and that organization culture should be scanned and tested for compatibility. If strategy formulation can be thought of as navigating the organization's external waters, strategy implementation addresses navigation of the internal currents, the domain of organization culture. Together, we have an alignment model for leading organizations through strategic change.

Figure 1 offers a sketch of this alignment model linking organization strategy with that interplay of leadership and culture that we can call implementation. In this model, the general manager has four key choices to make along the route to strategic change: whether to change; what to change; the significance of the culture-strategic change alignment; and the appropriate implementation steps. The latter two choices are of primary interest in the following discussion.

Insert Figure 1 Here

collective responses take root and grow.

Third, this process of culture development requires substantial amounts of energy, patience, and time. By scanning the organization's internal environment through an identification and assessment process (Schwartz and Davis, 1981), the general manager becomes cognizant of the collective body of assumptions that comprises the organization culture. This understanding, also the product of an emergent process, enters the strategic calculus at the third choice point--i.e., the strategy-culture compatibility test. To the extent that the answer to the compatibility question is "no", the general manager faces the prospect of convincing the organization membership that their interests are best served by uprooting old loyalties and supplanting them with new ones. One need not dig too deeply into the Organization Development literature to sense the difficulty in that process.

Fourth, the driving force behind the alignment of strategy and organization culture is the institutional leader. Culture adaptation is a time-consuming, value-laden process requiring the application of energy and insight that only the committed and skilled general manager can provide. As the organization confronts its culture in times of change, the active intervention of the institutional leader, and not merely the symbolic representation of commitment, is the critical resource.

A STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT MODEL FOR LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

desirable direction. Martin and Siehl (1983) refer to this as influencing the trajectory of organization culture. Whereas the instrumental view concentrates upon propelling the vessel of organization culture, the navigational view addresses steering the organization through the largely self-propelled currents of culture. We argue that, within the reality of strategic management, navigating the currents of culture is the more realistic view for the practicing general manager.

Four basic premises support this view of cultural navigation. First, an organization's culture is determined, to a significant degree, by the interactions within the organization in its infancy (Schein, 1983b). The organization's founder, or founder group, plays the leading role in this process, since he, she, or they contributed the basic idea and associated ideals which led to that collective endeavor in the first place. All that follows in the historical development of the organization will be reflected as increments to, or variations on, the primal theme.

Second, even in this formative context, the process of embedding a culture "...means only that the founder/leader has ways of getting the group to try out certain responses." (Schein, 1983b: 21). This represents culture management at a broad level of abstraction, but the tone is quite different from that implicit in the instrumental view. The general manager does not transform culture through quantum change. Instead, through interactions among the organization's organization of sub-cultures (Van Maanen and Barley, 1983), of which general management is one, preferred

over the organization's environment and competency in handling uncertainty, the point is that each strategic decision is a new one.

Cultural determinism is deceptive in two respects. First, narrowing the range of thought and assumption reduces the probability that the next strategic transition confronted will be supported by the culture "created" for today. Second, an instrumentally "created" culture, like any culture, is an evolving entity.

In summary, oversimplification of the concept of organizational culture and its dynamic nature calls into question the deterministic reliability of a strong organization culture, which the instrumentalist perspective purports to be able to deliver. We propose a second view of operationalizing a model of strategic change and culture. In this alternative perspective, the tricky currents of organization culture do not disappear, but are influenced by the energy and wisdom of leadership in what can be called the navigational view of managing culture.

THE NAVIGATIONAL VIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

A different perspective on organization culture is the navigational view. The underlying premise in this regard is that organization culture cannot be managed in a conventional, instrumental sense, as explained above. Instead, the most a general manager can expect to accomplish is to cajole, persuade, channel, nudge, and guide organization culture in a strategically

any and all of these forces work systematically to foster permanent sub-cultures from the days of an organization's infancy. The nature of collective interaction creates, at the least, the framework within which any and all of these forces can mold sub-culture groups. Ultimately, these groups can move towards institutionalization, operating with shared belief systems of their own.

If, for example, we accept Chandler's (1962) basic thesis that organizational structure follows strategic choice, and that one strategic phase is a functionally-differentiated one, then one might expect to witness development of a set of entrenched functional sub-cultures, the sales and accounting sub-cultures, for instance. It would seem plausible, therefore, that the relative insulation of, and intensity within, at least one sub-culture can threaten the solidarity of an organization culture presumed to be unitary. If organization culture represents the common denominator across all sub-cultures in an organization, then, we propose, to the extent that sub-cultures proliferate, organization culture becomes less operational as an instrument for organizational change.

Fourth, the instrumental view assumes that organization culture is inherently predictable and deterministic. Manage it and the way is cleared for implementing future transitions programs, the argument runs; a managed culture will "...meander its way to a solution." (Deal and Kennedy, 1982:151). But people come and go. People learn. Relationships change. As much as it challenges the conventional wisdom about general management's planned control

less and less likely. The tricky current here is the instrumentalist's belief that the eyes and ears trained to read market signals can apply the same techniques with the same facility in uncovering that for which the organization does, in fact, stand.

Third, a workable solidarity of organization culture is presumed to be achievable through instrumental action. That is, an organization's sub-cultures are inherently integratable.

Martin and Siehl (1983) have offered a three-way typology of the culture undercurrents that can be present in an organization: the enhancing, orthogonal, and counter subcultures. Enhancing sub-cultures provide a boost to the larger, organization culture, through their intense adherence to the latter's tenets.

Orthogonal sub-cultures run in the same direction as the dominant organization culture, but contain certain unique features, as well. Leaders of counter sub-cultures confound attempts at culture management through covert and overt expressions of disdain. An "uneasy symbiosis" between culture and counterculture exists as a result.

A key issue in this regard is the source of sub-cultures. Van Maanen and Barley (1983) have sketched a model describing the organization of sub-cultures within the larger organization. Sub-cultures form, they argue, and are energized by three exogenous forces--segmentation, importation, and technological--and three endogenous forces--ideological, career filtering, and contracultural. What is most interesting is the possibility that

The instrumental model predicts: Do all this, and a strong culture will have been constructed (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). Smooth sailing through cultural waters? We think not. A handful of very tricky currents awaits the practitioner following the instrumental model (Schein, 1984).

First, organization culture is not, individually or collectively, synonymous with myths, heroes, sagas, and rituals. These instruments are, instead and as argued already, the manifestations of the organization's culture. Each instrument reveals, at best, a fragment of that culture. Heroes embody literally some of the values and beliefs embedded in the culture. Through rituals, organization members act out partial representations of the culture.

To devise an intervention plan for strategy implementation in the form of myth and ritual is to court danger by ignoring the totality of the organization culture.

Second, it is debatable whether general management can readily identify an organization's culture. Overestimation of the prospects of culture identification can produce, in turn, an underestimation of the complexity of the culture change process. Basically, the complex set of values, beliefs, and practices that is brought to the organization by each member is shaped, honed, coopted, and transformed through the day-to-day process of collective action. As an organization matures, shared beliefs become more deeply embedded, and organization routines are formalized, ready expression of those basic assumptions becomes

instrumentalism could be characterized as a technical-fix approach to the problem of strategy-culture incompatibility, analogous to the implementation of a MIS system. A closer scrutiny of the underlying assumptions inherent in cultural instrumentalism will explicate our claim.

What does it mean to intervene and "manage" organization culture? The presumption is that the general manager can exercise direct control similar to the Fayolian process of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. Planning involves identification of the present culture, deciding whether that culture is "friendly" to implementation of the proposed strategic plans, and, if necessary, changing the culture to support such strategies. Organizing culture management implies identifying and assembling the necessary technical (policies, procedures, rules, etc.) and social (cabals, priests, gossips, and so on) instruments through which to direct the organization's culture (Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

Leading can be viewed as the orchestrating activity by which the composite social instrument--the cultural network--is tapped and manipulated towards the goal of harnessing the force of culture. Finally, controlling involves setting the limits of tolerance on individual mavericks, as well as enclaves, living outside the culture's mainstream. These technical instruments for culture management provide the rope that will be pulled in, sooner or later, if divergence from the mainstream reaches inappropriate proportions (Martin and Siehl, 1983).

about the complex phenomenon known as organization culture. These two perspectives on culture will be termed the short-term, instrumental view, and the longer-term, navigational view. After the basic character and implications of each perspective is presented, a rudimentary model for managing organization culture will be introduced. We call this model the Strategic Alignment Model for leadership in transitions.

THE INSTRUMENTAL VIEW OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Selznick (1957) wrote that an organization does not create culture, but, instead, embodies culture, and that leaders promote and protect culture-forming values. The distinction between creation of value and culture, on one hand, and culture's embodiment, promotion, and protection, on the other becomes critical for any meaningful try at operationalizing the concept of culture management. The two perspectives under present scrutiny diverge on this basic premise.

The instrumental view of organization culture is grounded in the assumption that culture is an instrument, a collection of techniques in general management's hands, for organizational change. Certain levers--symbol, myth, hero, ritual, saga, and so forth--can be manipulated to mold the cultural fabric of the organization to conform with general management's strategic change proposal, as well as to more readily respond to the next strategic change (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). This popular contemporary view is fundamentally short-term in its prescriptions. Despite its avowed human orientation,

assessing the fit between strategy and culture (Schwartz and Davis, 1981).

Choice Point #4...What interventions will be appropriate in moving the strategy and organization culture into closer alignment?

The fourth choice point hinges upon the degree to which the proposed strategic change is culturally compatible. One should note the presumptions that either, or both, actors--strategy and culture--are candidates for alteration (Schwartz and Davis, 1981). Further, a relative improvement in alignment is the goal.

A critical assumption made here is that all strategy changes involve culture changes. Strategies are ultimately the products of collective decisions, and, as such, are infused with values, assumptions, and beliefs held by those people proposing the strategy. Strategic changes are, by their nature, new views of the organization's "best" alignment with its environment. Thus, strategy implementation becomes fundamentally a process of linking strategy with the organization culture. This, we argue, is the arena for leadership--a process of persuading the adherents of a dominant culture to make room for a variation on the organization culture theme.

The fourth choice situation presents the general manager with a dilemma: pursue a short-term course of action to "fix" the strategy-culture mix, or prepare for a long-term transformation period. Which path is chosen will indicate a great deal about the general manager's perceptions and, we will argue, misperceptions

Choice Point #2...What is the "best" strategic response to the new circumstances?

Framed in the context of relevant opportunities and threats perceived through environmental scanning, this is the technical, content question inherent in strategy formulation. The strategy literature grows regarding portfolios, matrices, and competitive positioning--all content issues.

But formulation of strategy is a provisional activity, fundamentally sterile unless and until the general manager considers whether the organization "can deliver" on this "best" course of collective action. Without the infusion of value and purpose to accompany the proposed change--the challenge of institutional leadership--the organization will be unprepared to accommodate its changed context, and adoption of the strategic change is problematic. In light of this, the third and fourth choice points pertain to the process of strategy implementation.

Choice Point #3...To what degree is the "best" candidate for strategic change compatible with the organization culture?

After answering the "what" question, the general manager turns to consider whether the provisional strategy is, in fact, compatible with the organization's culture. The perceived degree of compatibility indicates the alignment between strategy and culture, the primary determinant in the model of alignment that will be developed later in this paper. In this context, cultural risk assessment has been the focus of one process model for

is required, since it is their shared body of assumptions that is being challenged by the new strategy.

A final point is that culture endures on the basis of positive and negative reinforcement (Schein, 1983b). The navigational leader, cognizant of his or her own limitations and mortality, conceives and constructs the channels through which the desired reinforcement process will operate and be sustained. Structure follows strategy to support the institutionalization of values implicit in the strategy change. For example, an organizational design including quality circles may logically emerge in order to sustain the new strategy.

In short, the general manager acts by pursuing all three of the generic intervention activities that have been described here to transform the culture. The leader's goal should be to align strategy and culture to the degree possible, given the setting, recognizing both the relatively restricted range of culture change and the substantial amount of human energy required to nudge culture "off center" to any degree.

A CASE STUDY IN LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION CULTURE

The setting is an affluent and rapidly-growing Midwestern public school district; we will call it the North Star District. While neighboring urban and suburban districts have been experiencing the triple "squeeze" of declining enrollments, stable or declining tax bases, and constituent dissatisfaction with the educational product being delivered, the story has been different

at North Star. In recent years, the district has been busily building additions to its physical facilities. Teachers have been hired at a rate consistently exceeding attrition. And not only are enrollments increasing, but the largest growth segment can be found in the elementary-school age-group. While remnants of its 1960's agricultural community roots still dot North Star's territory, prototypical suburban development and outlooks have become the rule in the county that North Star calls home.

North Star's home state has maintained a long and widely-respected commitment to the social needs of its residents, and the tax burden upon the individual and corporate citizenry does reflect the price to be paid for such a commitment. The state finances its programs by depending heavily upon the health of several economic sectors that are subject to cyclical swings; agriculture heads the list in this regard. Funding for education has followed these cyclical swings and, over the recent past, had lagged behind other programs in the public sector.

The character of the district organization itself is not unusual. Recent superintendents and their administrative staffs have followed the highly-formalized process of educational administration similar to the majority of districts across the state and nation. Authority and control has been centralized in the district office, and the superintendents have worked very closely with the Board of Education to set and administer educational policy. Additional inputs have been drawn from parents, who have participated in addressing such district-wide issues as school boundaries and space needs. Teacher expertise on

curriculum and child development matters occasionally has been incorporated in the district's planning process.

A newly-appointed superintendent, educated and trained in the same professional standards that characterized North Star's previous administrations, stepped into this traditional culture carrying a commitment to change. The new superintendent defined herself as a change agent, although she did not have a formal blueprint for strategic change. She had, instead, a set of assumptions and principles to guide the district and prepare it for the future.

There were several basic tenets to the approach she had developed: first, the construction of a mission statement to define the purpose of education in North Star; second, a strategic implementation plan to guide the district in the pursuit of that mission; and, third, an open, participative process for building a constituency to support the mission and open the channels of communication within the district and between the district's personnel and their clients. In short, she confronted the four strategic choice points of the Strategic Alignment Model. At Choice Point #1, she determined that the impending, although not immediate, forces of change at work in North Star's environment were sufficiently threatening to warrant attempting to make changes to North Star's mission. The mission statement was manifestation of Choice Point #2, and the implementation plan reflected the assessment made at Choice Point #3 with regard to the alignment between her mission statement and

North Star's culture. Her participative process exemplified the decision reached at Choice Point #4.

The third plank in her platform is the one most pertinent for this paper's discussion on organization culture. The superintendent was rather well-acquainted and understanding of the traditional North Star culture, with its "top down", centralized pattern of decision-making, but she also recognized that the culture would have to be modified to prepare North Star for confronting the district's critical in the future. Decision-making needed to become more decentralized and moved to the school-site level, with teachers and parents assuming more control and responsibility for the education process. To prepare North Star's people for this eventuality, she began a series of formal and informal interventions to redefine the culture's long-held assumptions.

A number of examples of these interventions can be cited. From Day 1, the superintendent worked with a variety of stakeholder groups within the district. As rarely done by any predecessors, she visited the classrooms and opened the decision-making process to parent and community constituents by including them on ad hoc committees. Hundreds of parents were solicited for their views on the shape and scope of North Star's programs. North Star reached out to the business community to explore the possible links for the human, financial, and technological benefit of both interest groups. Decentralization of school-level decisions--an innovation known as School-Based Management--began to appear on district agendas. And the teachers were frequently invited to

participate on key district committees.

All this took place within the first few months of her administration. She focused on Choice Point #3, taking and retaking the culture pulse of North Star, while modelling the types of interventions--choice point #4--that she believed to be appropriate for North Star's strategic change process. Through this process of pilot intervention, followed by prompt feedback, she determined that North Star was collectively ready and willing to respond to her strategic vision. The culture appeared to be sufficiently malleable to move ahead with the new strategies for North Star's alignment with the 1980's and beyond.

In the midst of this unfreezing process (Schein, 1983a), North Star experienced a severe budgetary crisis, due to legislative cutbacks in the Fall of 1981. All school districts in the state were originally set to receive \$1,416 per pupil for the 1982-83 school year, an amount slashed to \$1,325 by a special session of the state legislature. North Star lost \$1.5 million, as an immediate result, with another \$800,000 disappearing due to reductions in transportation, special education, secondary vocational education, and summer school allocations. All told, 10% of the district's \$24 million budget had to be cut.

Several other issues with budgetary implications were pending at the same time. Salary negotiations for custodians, secretaries, school aides, nurses, and supervisors were either underway or impending. Projected enrollments for 1982-83 were being revised, and there was a question as to whether North Star would take

advantage of a new statute permitting special tax levies for transportation and summer school.

Rather than allow this crisis to forestall the newly-emerging participative culture at North Star, the superintendent used the occasion to demonstrate that even under very adverse conditions, participation was appropriate and effective.

Nearly 1,500 North Star district personnel participated in a four-month process of open dialogue and prioritization of district needs. Open meetings, involving an estimated 2,000 parents, students, and interested citizens, were held to solicit opinions as well as to receive feedback on preliminary budget priority recommendations. The superintendent received a standing ovation from North Star personnel in response to the final recommendations on how the budget was to be cut. The North Star Board of Education unanimously approved the proposals.

Another key intervention designed to modify the culture at North Star was the introduction of School-Based Management. School-Based Management places greater autonomy and decision-making authority in the hands of the principal, teachers, parents, and community members at each school site.

The superintendent persuaded three respected and veteran principals, who, in turn, prevailed upon three of their colleagues, to assume the risks of decentralized and consensual decision-making at the school level. All six schools involved were awarded a grant to finance their experiments over an initial

three-year period; this implementation was to serve as the pilot for eventual, district-wide implementation of School-Based Management.

Her objectives throughout the budget crisis and the introduction of School-Based Management were to test the culture at North Star for its alignment with her strategic vision, as well as to choose the appropriate interventions--Choice Points #3 and #4.

Implementation of change in each situation involved the delicate process of supplementing the traditional beliefs about how North Star should meet its commitment to its customers with innovative assumptions about how to improve upon the basic educational product.

The conduct and progress of this strategic change process did not go unnoticed outside North Star. Other opportunities came to light and, as quickly as she appeared at the helm, the superintendent departed, leaving the district with some new skills in participative management, and several new projects in their infancy. In the aftermath of her departure, task forces continued to form, act, and dissolve. The business partnership program flourished and took shape in the form of a foundation. But the energy behind the new participatory process had dissipated. A review of North Star Agendas in the months after the departure revealed a "business as usual" attitude. School-Based Management had come under increasing attack as being antithetical to the way things were done at North Star, for example. The old, traditional assumptions began to reassert themselves. Authority was returned to the central administration

at North Star, as the experiment in School-Based Management was challenged by the following superintendent and the Board of Education, both uneasy with the implications of greater decentralization. The scope of meaningful stakeholder participation in district decisions narrowed, and a visible change in teacher participation was apparent.

What happened? In the brief era of vision and change, the superintendent was able to introduce new cultural assumptions and nudge the traditional culture "off center" to some degree, at the cost of considerable amounts of individual and group energy. In the aftermath of the leader's departure, the ready adoption of more traditional, culturally-compatible programs, and the equally-ready willingness to dismantle the new experiments provide evidence that North Star's culture really had not been altered significantly. North Star will never be the same for the experience, but the currents of the traditional culture continue to flow.

CONCLUSION

The alignment model for leadership in transitions has four immediate practical implications.

First, culture management can be hostile to innovation, that necessary process of organization self-renewal. The irony in institutionalization--the process by which value and purpose is installed in an organization--is that such maturation renders the

organization that much more rigid than it was before in its capacity to change. The range of thought and action is narrowed, as specific values and purposes are inculcated in the organization's membership (Selznick, 1957). In economic terms, the more embedded the organization's culture, the greater the magnitude of the associated sunk costs and the more difficult it becomes for leadership to break down such inertia.

Innovation begins with the generation of new ideas and takes shape through the transactions among organization members. Innovation challenges the present cultural order. The primary point is that culture development places debris in the path of the flow of innovation. As a result, conducting an effective innovation program may well require the strategic alignment approach we have proposed, if the systematic effects of cultural sunk costs are to be cleared from the flow of innovation.

Second, the founder is mortal. Being there first appears to count heavily in the formation of an organization culture. But the founder will depart someday. The enormous dissipation of energy accompanying that departure will make it mandatory that the new general manager and the key lieutenants from the dominant cultural coalition collaborate in confronting Choice Point #2-- that is, what do we want the culture change to look like?

The practical implication is for the founder, during his or her tenure, to begin thinking about, and the successors to recognize, the likelihood of misalignment between the second-generation of leadership, even if people are promoted from within the

organization, and the founder's cultural legacy. In short, Choice Point #1 logically comes during the founder's presence. Since no successor will be able to duplicate the content, or the process, of the founder's navigational behavior, the passing of the founder is a strategic event in its own right. The Strategic Alignment Model can be applied to this inevitable transition period.

A third practical implication of strategic alignment regards the cultural and strategic aspects of mergers and acquisitions. Public posturings about such marriages commonly highlight not only the technical and strategic reasons for this reorganization, but also what amounts to cultural justification. For example, "We assess ourselves to be an engineering company; they are a marketing company, and that is why we merged." An underlying, instrumentalist assumption is being expressed. In other words, the acquisition is viewed as a desirable cultural addition. A value--goodwill, in the accountant's jargon--is even assigned to this acquired asset. We claim no originality in reminding potential acquirers of the trail of organizational flotsam created by the temptation to oversimplify the ease with which such a cultural acquisition can be consummated. Explicit and long-term attention to the realistic prospects of such a marriage can be accommodated by the Strategic Alignment Model framework.

Fourth, managing organization culture has profound moral implications. All management activity is manipulative, in some form and magnitude. Managers at all levels, and of all functional persuasions, attempt to influence others with what skills and

power can be mustered. The moral question is whether the deliberate manipulation of organization culture crosses the boundary between, on one hand, the logic of efficiency implicit in culture management, and, on the other, the common moral requirements of individual autonomy and opportunity (Richards, 1971). The concept of culture management, in other words, accentuates the tension between individual and collective pursuits. The problem is not merely acute in the instrumental view, but is present, as well, in the navigational perspective.

Individuals pursue their personal projects: indeed, the conflict between project pursuits makes organizational life interesting (Lomasky, 1967). Shaping organization culture--that is, narrowing the range of permissible thought and action--holds the potential for conflict with the rights of organization members. Amidst the hype surrounding the popularity of the instrumental view and the proposition that successful companies have strongly-cohesive cultures, the perspective of the individual, in moral terms, gets easily lost. This argument will have to await another time and place for development, but in the context of cultural management, particularly in the future, it is appropriate to raise the issue.

Organizational and culture change must, by definition, be a major focus for the implementation of strategic change. But the extent degree to which culture can be influenced, the requisite skills of the organization's leaders in directing the change process, and the energy, effort, and cost of the intervention

process all need to be realistically assessed. Culture counts, but culture management requires the sustained, energetic, and skilled hand of general management's leadership as the primary force in navigating the tricky currents of organization culture.

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